

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claim 4 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 1 through 3, 5, and 7 through 10 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A video combining method for superimposing a virtual image generated by a computer on a real world observed by a user, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a real image obtained by image sensing the real world;

inputting position and orientation information of a view point of the user;

generating a virtual image based on the position and orientation information;

extracting a virtual image elimination area of the virtual image by (a) detecting an area of the real image corresponding to an area where the user designates in the real world and (b) extracting the detected area as the virtual image elimination area; and

combining the virtual image with the real image except for the virtual image elimination area,

wherein the virtual image elimination area allows the user to observe the corresponding area of the real image which is located behind the virtual image and which normally cannot be observed by the user due to the virtual image being superimposed on the area.

2. (Currently Amended) A video combining apparatus for superimposing a virtual image generated by a computer on a real world observed by a user, said apparatus comprising:

an image input unit adapted to input a real image obtained by image sensing the real world;

a position and orientation information input unit adapted to input position and orientation information of a view point of the user;

a virtual image generation unit adapted to generate a virtual image based on the position and orientation information;

an elimination area extraction unit adapted to extract a virtual image elimination area of the virtual image by (a) detecting an area of the real image corresponding to an area where the user designates in the real world and (b) extracting the detected area as the virtual image elimination area; and

a combining unit adapted to combine the virtual image with the real image except for the virtual image elimination area,

wherein the virtual image elimination area allows the user to observe the corresponding area of the real image which is located behind the virtual image and which normally cannot be observed by the user due to the virtual image being superimposed on the area.

3. (Currently Amended) A video combining method for superimposing a virtual image on a video image of a real world observed by a user, said method comprising:

an image input step of inputting a video image of the real world;

a position and orientation information input step of inputting position and orientation information of a view point of the user;

a virtual image generation step of generating a virtual image based on the position and orientation information;

a designated area detection step of detecting an elimination area designated by the user using a designation means by (a) detecting an area of the video image corresponding to an area where the user designates in the real world using the designation means and (b) extracting the detected area as the elimination area; and

a superimposition step of superimposing the virtual image on the video image except a virtual image of a portion corresponding to the elimination area detected in said designated area detection step,

wherein the elimination area allows the user to observe the corresponding area of the real image which is located behind the virtual image and which normally cannot be observed by the user due to the virtual image being superimposed on the area.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) The video combining method according to claim 4 3, wherein a marker is located on the designation means, and wherein in said designated area detection step, ~~a~~ the marker located on the designation means is detected from the video image, and the elimination area is detected based on a position of the marker in the video image.

6. (Previously Presented) The video combining method according to claim 3, further comprising an information input step for inputting a position and orientation information of the designation means,

wherein in said designated area detection step, the elimination area is detected from the video image based on the position and orientation information of the designation means.

7. (Currently Amended) The video combining method according to claim 3, wherein the designation means has a frame having a particular color, and wherein in said designated area detection step, the elimination area is detected from the video image based on information on an area surrounded with ~~a~~ the particular color in the video image.

8. (Currently Amended) The video combining method according to claim 3, wherein the designation means is at least one hand of the user, and wherein in said designated area detection step, the elimination area is detected from the video image based on information on a closed area formed by at least one hand of the user.

9. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium holding program code to realize a video combining method for superimposing a virtual image generated by a computer on a real world observed by a user, by a computer, comprising:

process procedure code for inputting a real image of the real world obtained by image sensing;

process procedure code for inputting position and orientation information of a view point of the user;

process procedure code for generating a virtual image based on the position and orientation information;

process procedure code for extracting a virtual image elimination area by (a) detecting an area of the real image corresponding to an area where the user designates in the real world and (b) extracting the detected area as the virtual image elimination area; and

process procedure code for combining the virtual image with the real image except for the virtual image elimination area,

wherein the virtual image elimination area allows the user to observe the corresponding area of the real image which is located behind the virtual image and which normally cannot be observed by the user due to the virtual image being superimposed on the area.

10. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium holding program code to realize a video combining method for superimposing a virtual image on a video image of a real world observed by a user, by a computer, comprising:

process procedure code for inputting a video image of the real world obtained by image sensing;

process procedure code for inputting position and orientation information of a view point of the user;

process procedure code for generating a virtual image based on the position and orientation information;

process procedure code for detecting an elimination area designated by the user using a designation means by (a) detecting an area of the video image corresponding to an area where the user designates in the real world using the designation means and (b) extracting the detected area as the elimination area; and

process procedure code for superimposing the virtual image on the video image obtained by image sensing except a virtual image of a portion corresponding to the elimination area detected in said detection process,

wherein the elimination area allows the user to observe the corresponding area of the real image which is located behind the virtual image and which normally cannot be observed by the user due to the virtual image being superimposed on the area.